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AUTHOR Ray, Eileen Berlin
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ABSTRACT

A study tested a causal model of job burnout from a communication perspective. Drawing from Linear Force Aggregation Theory, social structure theory, and current burnout literature, the study posited direct relationships between network integration, job-related stress, and cognitive distance between perceptions of self and job. It also hypothesized that cognitive distance would mediate the relationships of network integration and stress to burnout. The subjects, nurses and aides from seven different units of a large children's hospital, completed measures of burnout, cognitive distance, job-related stress, and network integration. Results showed that although the model fit the data, only the path of stress to burnout was significant. The fact that the model was not supported indicates a lack of empirical support for assertions found throughout the burnout literature. (Extensive tables of data are appended.) (Author/FL)

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JOB BURNOUT FROM A COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

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Eileen Berlin Ray
University of Kentucky

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Abstract

This study tested a causal model of job burnout from a communication perspective. Under the theoretic framework of Linear Force Aggregation Theory and social structure, and drawing from the current burnout literature, direct relationships between network integration, job-related stress, and cognitive distance between perceptions of self and job were posited. It was also hypothesized that cognitive distance mediated the relationships of network integration and stress to burnout. Although the model fit the data, only the path of stress to burnout was significant. When respecified to this one path, the model still fit the data. The fact that the model was not supported indicates a lack of empirical support for assertions found throughout the burnout literature. The need for more research is advocated before organizations invest their time, money, and energy into assessing and attempting to remedy suspected burnout problems.

Burnout, a reaction to chronic job-related stress, is a phenomenon prevalent in human service organizations (Cherniss, 1980; Edelwich, 1980; Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, 1976; Mattingly, 1977). People in these occupations are especially vulnerable to burnout as a result of working closely and intensively with their clients over an extended period of time. Mental health (Pines & Maslach, 1978) and day care workers (Maslach & Pines, 1977) report longer work hours, high patient-staff ratios, and drawing a distinction between their job and personal life are associated with greater stress and burnout. Police officers experienced an increase in family strain, isolation, and alcohol and drug use as burnout increased (Maslach & Jackson, 1979). Kanner, Kafry, and Pines (1978) warn that the absence of positive conditions, as well as the presence of negative ones, are related to burnout. The importance of interpersonal relationships as a mediator to burnout has been noted by social service workers (Pines & Kafry, 1978) and nurses (Albrecht, 1982), while Albrecht, Irey, and Mundy (in press) found that child welfare workers who were integrated in a communication network experienced less burnout than those less integrated.

While the research to date provides some interesting findings, it is typified by a lack of a guiding theoretic framework (Albrecht, 1982; Kanner et al., 1978). The purpose of this study was to test a model of job burnout developed from a communication perspective. This perspective was considered appropriate for several reasons. First, previous research has included some communication-related variables such as work relationships (Maslach & Jackson, 1979; Maslach & Pines, 1977; Pines & Kafry, 1978; Pines & Maslach, 1978), support (Pines & Kafry, 1978), social feedback (Pines & Kafry, 1978), talking with others

(Albrecht, 1982), and network integration (Albrecht et al., in press). What is lacking is an explanation of how these variables affect one's perception of his or her work environment. Second, the burnout literature emphasizes the importance of social support as a buffer against burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Daley, 1979; Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach, 1977; Sutton, 1977). This support is typically considered in terms of formal support groups established by the organization (Cherniss, 1980; Edelwich, 1980; Maslach, 1977). With the exception of Albrecht et al. (in press), studies have not examined the role of informal relationships as mediators to burnout. These informal relationships are important to consider. They emerge from the exchange of information between system members. Based on the frequency and content of this communication, members become linked to each other in networks (Farace, Monge, & Russell, 1977). Identifying these communication networks is useful for investigating burnout by (1) determining how integrated organization members are, and (2) locating each member's access to information that would be expected to affect his or her perceptions of the job.

Theoretic Framework and Hypotheses

Under the theoretic framework of Linear Force Aggregation Theory and social structure, this study investigated burnout by examining: (1) the cognitive distance between an individual's perception of him or herself and his or her job; (2) job-related stress; and (3) one's perceived integration in a communication network. An explication of this framework and hypotheses follows.

Linear Force Aggregation Theory (LFAT)

According to LFAT, attitudes are based on the amount of information organization members receive about objects they perceive as salient in the organization

(Woelfel & Haller, 1971). This information is weighted by: (1) the number of messages received; (2) whether the message is positive or negative; and (3) the significance of the source. Thus, an attitude is defined as the result of prior message inputs received about a topic dependent on the extent to which incoming messages are numerous, salient, and from significant sources.

In an organization, members gather information about objects through their interactions with others (Albrecht, 1979; Taylor, 1977: Taylor, Farace, & Monge, 1976). The accumulation of this information enables them to define the attributes of salient objects and to develop shared meaning for these objects.

The central assumption in LFAT is that a person's attitude will be positive to the extent that he or she perceives the salient object(s) as congruent with his or her self-concept (Albrecht, 1979; Barnett, Serota, & Taylor, 1976; Danes & Woelfel in Woelfel & Danes, 1980). The strength of an attitude depends on the extent to which previous incoming messages have been numerous, salient and from a significant source. For workers in human service organizations, attitudes toward themselves and their jobs have been strengthened by numerous messages over a long period of time. The nature of the human service worker is a unique one. Initially, they perceive their job as a "calling" (Cherniss, 1980; Kadushin, 1974) and define their self-concept by their job success. Not only are their conceptions of "me" and "my job" the result of a long history of incoming messages from significant sources but they initially perceive these two concepts as very similar.

Cognitive Distance. Researchers of burnout warn that many human service professionals are unable to maintain their initial dedication and commitment due to the emotional stresses of their job, thus beginning the burnout process.

One initial indicator that the burnout process is beginning is a conscious attempt by the worker to psychologically distance him or herself from his or her job (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach & Pines, 1977). Edelwich (1980) refers to this process as "detachment," characterized by the worker still doing his or her job but psychologically detaching him or herself from it. This detachment precedes burnout and is a necessary but not sufficient condition of its development (Cherniss, 1980; Edelwich, 1980). Thus, not all who psychologically distance themselves from their job will burn out but workers who are burned out have distanced themselves from their job. In the terms of LFAT, the cognitive distance between perceptions of the concepts "me" and "my job" will increase. Hypothesis 1 states:

H_1: The greater the perceived cognitive distance between the concepts "me" and "my job," the greater the burnout.

Job-Related Stress. In previous burnout research, investigators have selected the stressor variables of interest to them and imposed these preselected variables on the respondents. However, an important implication of LFAT is that the members of the system, not the researcher, determine what variables are stressful to them. Therefore, the particular stressors for an organization are determined by organization members as those stressors perceived as salient in their work environment. The aggregation of these variables across system members provides the stressor variables in that organization.

Burnout is conceptualized as a reaction to chronic, job-related stress. Stress becomes chronic as the number and frequency of salient stressor variables increases, leading to greater burnout. Hypothesis 2 states:

H_2: The greater the job-related stress, the greater the burnout.

Cherniss (1980) described emotional detachment as a frequently used defensive strategy for coping with chronic job stress. Since this distancing precedes burnout, and since chronic stress precedes this distancing, it was expected that the relationship between chronic job stress and burnout would be mediated by the cognitive distance between the concepts "me" and "my job." As the number and frequency of stressors increase, so should the cognitive distance, thereby increasing the potential for burnout. Hypothesis 3 states:

H_3: The greater the job-related stress, the greater the perceived cognitive distance between the concepts "me" and "my job."

Social Structure

Structure refers to the pattern of linkages that exist between members. These linkages are governed by the organization's informal relationships (Farace et al., 1977). The result is an emergent network based on the pattern of stable communication relationships between people.

The relationship between social structure and cognitive processes has long been recognized in sociological theory (Albrecht, 1979; Nisbet, 1974). It emphasizes the strong influence of one's position in the social structure on their cognitive perceptions. LFAT implies that perceptions are based on the amount of information one has. Different locations of members in the network exposes them to different people and to differing types and amounts of information (Saltiel & Woelfel, 1975). Research has found evidence suggesting different psychological climates for key and non-key communicators as a result of their different locations in the communication network (Albrecht, 1979; Taylor, 1977). An examination of the network structure adds to the LFAT framework by: (1) identifying the structural relationships among members in the organization; and (2) identifying message content areas upon which the

relationships are based (Albrecht, 1979; Taylor, 1977).

Network Integration. The importance of being integrated in a support group is frequently cited as a prevention of burnout (Copans, Krell, Gundy, Rogan, & Field, 1979; Daley, 1979; Freudenberger, 1977; Larson, Gilbertson, & Powell, 1978; Maslach, 1976; Sutton, 1977). Pines and Kafry (1978) found that in settings where there was job-related and supportive feedback from peers and supervisors, burnout levels were low. Albrecht et al. (in press) found that individuals who were integrated in a communication network reported less burnout than those less integrated. Therefore, an inverse relationship was expected between network integration and burnout. Hypothesis 4 states:

H_4: The greater the network integration, the less the burnout.

People who are securely embedded in support groups are able to develop ongoing relationships that provide both emotional and social support (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Group members may become significant others and through their interaction attitudes are formed, maintained, and changed as shared meaning develops. Through feedback from regular communication with other group members, workers can monitor their perceptions of themselves and their job and reconcile cognitive discrepancies. In this way, integration in a communication network acts to keep cognitive distance from reaching a dysfunctional level, thereby mediating subsequent burnout. Hypothesis 5 states:

H_5: The greater the network integration, the less the perceived cognitive distance between the concepts "me" and "my job."

Taken together, these hypotheses suggest the causal model shown in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Method

Respondents. The organization used for this research was a large children's hospital located in the Pacific Northwest. The hospital is a private, non-profit teaching institution and provides full health care services to children from birth to 21 years of age.

Respondents were nurses and aides drawn from the seven units of: (1) burns, orthopedics, and surgery; (2) infant care; (3) infant intensive care; (4) medical care; (5) pediatric intensive care; (6) psychiatric care; and (7) rehabilitation. Participation in the study was voluntary and confidentiality was assured.

Data Collection. Data was collected at two points in time, with a two week interval between collections. Identical procedures were followed for both collections.

Questionnaires were distributed to the seven head nurses. They, in turn, distributed one questionnaire packet to each staff member in their unit. Participants completed their questionnaire on their own time, sealed it in a manila envelope provided by the researcher, and returned it to a specified location. Questionnaires were collected over a ten day period. This length of time was necessary because of staggered work schedules and the fact that many staff did not work consecutive days and were often absent for several days in a row. Extending the data collection for 10 days gave more people the opportunity to participate.

Measurement of Variables

Burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) was used to measure burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1980). The MBI consists of 25 statements, each rated on frequency and intensity dimensions. The frequency scale ranges from "never" at 0 to "every day" at 6 and is labelled at every point. The intensity scale is bounded by "very mild, barely noticeable" at 1 to "major, very strong" at 7.

It is not completed if the respondent checks "never" on the frequency scale.

Maslach and Jackson (1980) reported four subscales of the MBI, determined by factor analysis. Factor loadings of .40 or higher were considered acceptable. The factors were: (1) emotional exhaustion (9 items); (2) depersonalization (5 items); (3) personal accomplishment (8 items); and (4) personal involvement (3 items). In this study, mean scores were calculated for each of these subscales. These mean scores were then summed to equal total frequency and intensity burnout scores. Following the precedent set by Maslach and Jackson (1980), these two scores were treated as independent of each other.

Convergent validity of the burnout construct was assessed by correlating the frequency and intensity scales of the MBI with the Tedium Scale (Kafry & Pines in Albrecht et al., in press). The Tedium Scale has been used to measure burnout in approximately half of the empirical studies. It is a 21-item questionnaire that assesses physical, attitudinal, and emotional exhaustion. Items are rated on a 7-point scale bounded by "never" at 1 and "always" at 7. Acceptable test-retest (Albrecht et al., in press; Kanner et al., 1978) and internal reliabilities (Albrecht et al., in press) have been reported.

Cognitive Distance. Cognitive distance was measured by a 9-item scale designed by the researcher to assess how similar or different respondents perceived themselves from their jobs. The theoretic rationale for these items was drawn from LFAT which asserts that a person's perception of his or her job will be positive to the extent it is perceived as similar to his or her self-concept. Two items asked respondents to judge the similarity of the paired comparisons: (1) "me" and "my job"; and (2) "me" and "work" on a 7-point scale bounded by "the same" at 1 and "completely different" at 7. The remaining 7 items included: I feel no personal attachment to my job; my job is the most important thing in my life; even when I'm not at work, it's always on my mind;

I draw no distinction between my personal life and my work life; I feel emotionally involved with my successes and failures at work; my feelings about my job have no effect on how I feel about myself in general; my job is a big part of who I am. These items were rated on a 7-point scale bounded by "strongly disagree" at 1 and "strongly agree" at 7.

Job-Related Stress. Because an important aspect of LFAT is that salient variables in an organization are determined by that system, interviews were conducted to identify these salient variables prior to constructing the stress questionnaire. These interviews were conducted with groups of voluntary interviewees in each of the participating units. Their response to the question, "What things do you find stressful about your job?" were content analyzed across units. Twenty stressors were identified by all seven units and were included in the questionnaire. They were: malfunctioning equipment; dealing with family members; when floating, lack of familiarity with the unit; being called in on my day off; high patient/staff ratio; dealing with inefficient departments; when 1 or 2 patients demand all my attention; reports not thorough; when I'm unable to play or talk with patients; inadequate information from doctors about patients: when floating, not knowing my assignment until the last minute; being caught in the middle between doctors and parents; working weekends and/or holidays; lacking information on the charts; overcrowded rooms; working long stretches; physical geography of the hospital; the politics of the hospital; telephone interruptions; not being treated like a professional.

Items were rated on a 7-point scale bounded by "not stressful at all" at 1 to "extremely stressful" at 7. Respondents rated how stressful each item was on: (1) a "typically" busy day; (2) a stable - neither real busy nor slow day; and (3) a "typically" slow day. The job-related stress score was the mean score of the 20 items. The greater this score, the greater the chronic job-related

stress.

Network Integration. Network integration was defined as the extent to which an individual perceived he or she communicated with other members of his or her work unit. Because organizational networks vary according to their content and function (Farace et al., 1977), the two networks of job and non-job related communication were included. Job-related communication included talking about caring for the patients, dealing with families, and trading work-related advice. Non-job related communication dealt with all other communication, such as discussing personal problems, social topics, and family matters.

An individual's integration, then, was determined by the frequency of his or her total contact across networks. Thus, the greater the frequency of communication with more system members, the greater the integration. The system was defined as the worker's work unit.

Given a list of all members of their work unit, respondents rated how often they talked with each member about job and non-job topics on a 7-point scale bounded by "never - or less than once a month" at 1 to "more than once a day" at 7 (Richards, 1975). The integration score, adapted from Parks (1977) was the ratio between the total number of possible linkages across networks at the maximum frequency of communication and the sum of the reported frequencies for each contact and ranged from 0 - 1.00:

$$I = \frac{L}{(N-1)\,P}$$

I = integration
L = sum of observed frequencies of communication
N = network size
P = maximum link strength or frequency of communication

Analyses

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programs (Nie, Hull, Jenkens, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975) and the LISREL IV computer program (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1978).

Descriptive statistics for the respondents and the variables were computed. Internal reliabilities, using Cronbach's alpha, and test-retest reliabilities were assessed for all variables.

Following initial examination of the hypotheses using Pearson product-moment correlations, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression techniques were used. To then determine what part of the correlation was due to direct and indirect effects, decomposition of correlation techniques were used (Kerlinger & Pedhauzer, 1973; McPhee & Siebold, 1979).

While correlation and regression analyses are useful for examining specified relationships between variables, both are limited (Parks, 1977). As Monge (1982) argues, these methods do not correspond to the theoretic logic of systems theory. They are only capable of examining pieces of the model, rather than the entire model as a whole. To test the entire model simultaneously, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used. Figure 2 presents the model and corresponding structural equations tested in this study.

Insert Figure 2 about here

Results

Descriptive Analyses

One hundred and nine people participated in the study. Of these, 93% were female and most (90%) were Caucasian. Forty-five percent had completed 4 years of college. Most (66%) were RN's. Forty percent worked the day shift, 25% the evening, and 21% the night shift. Eighty-one percent worked 40-49 hours a week. The average length of time in their present job was 3.9 years (sd=10.17) and their average length of time in general hospital care work was 6.10 years (sd=5.23).

Respondents were slightly more than moderately stressed ($\bar{X}$=4.55, sd=.86). The

mean for cognitive distance was 3.87 (sd=.86), indicating that respondents perceived themselves as neither cognitively similar or different from their jobs. The average network integration was .34 (sd=.18), suggesting that, generally, respondents communicated with about 1/3 of their colleagues in their work unit about job and non-job related topics. The overall burnout level was relatively low. The mean score for frequency of burnout was 8.65 (sd=2.67) out of a possible 18. The mean intensity of burnout score was 11.64 (sd=3.28) out of a possible 21.

Internal and test-retest reliabilities for Waves 1 and 2 (see Table 1) were considered acceptable.

Insert Table 1 about here

Convergent validity of the burnout construct was assessed by correlating both the frequency and intensity scales of the MBI with the Tedium Scale. The results ($r=.58$, $p \leq .001$ for frequency and tedium; $r=.56$, $p \leq .001$ for intensity and tedium) suggest that it would be premature to assume that both instruments are tapping identical constructs.

In an effort to replicate the factor structure reported by Maslach and Jackson (1980), the MBI frequency and intensity scales were factor analyzed. No similar factor structure was found.

Hypotheses

Results of the correlation and regression analyses are presented first. The correlation matrix is found in Table 2. Figure 3 provides the regression coefficients and correlations among the exogenous variables for frequency (see Model A) and intensity (see Model B) of burnout. The results of the test of the overall model will be discussed last.

Insert Table 2 about here

Insert Figure 3 about here

No support was found for a relationship between cognitive distance and burnout (H_1) (r=.14, n.s., frequency; r=.10, n.s., intensity). When these correlations were decomposed, the correlation for frequency and cognitive distance increased to .19, while there was no change for intensity and cognitive distance. When burnout was regressed on cognitive distance, neither regression coefficient was significant (β = .09, n.s., frequency; β =.03, n.s., intensity).

Substantial support was found for the relationship between job-related stress and burnout (H_2) (r=.43, $p \leq .001$, frequency; r=.49, $p \leq .001$, intensity). After decomposition, both correlations increased (r=.48, frequency; r=.52, intensity). When entered with the other variables in a regression equation predicting burnout, the coefficients were also significant (β=.44, $p \leq .001$, frequency; β=.49, $p \leq .001$, intensity).

A slight, significant relationship between job-related stress and cognitive distance (H_3) was found (r=.17, $p < .05$). However, when entered into the regression equation with network integration, the regression coefficient was not significant (β=.13, n.s.), providing no support for this hypothesis.

No support was found for the relationship between network integration and burnout (H_4) (r=-.02, n.s., frequency; r=.04, n.s., intensity). Decomposition of the correlations showed no difference for the frequency or intensity correlations. Regression analysis results were also not significant (β=-.13, n.s., frequency; β=-.07, n.s., intensity).

For network integration and cognitive distance (H_5), a small but significant relationship was found (r=.20, $p < .05$). However, this relationship was in the opposite direction as hypothesized. When entered into the regression equation with job-related stress, the regression coefficient was significant and still in the opposite direction as hypothesized (β=.17, $p < .05$).

Overall Test of the Model. The overall model was tested using the LISREL IV computer program (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1978). LISREL requires the specification of model matrices to include all parameters being estimated. In the model tested, network integration, job-related stress, and cognitive distance were fixed at 1 because each had only one indicant. Because the correlation between frequency and intensity of burnout was so high (r=.84), they were treated as multiple indicators of burnout. The correlation matrix was analyzed, providing standardized solutions. LISREL provides a maximum likelihood solution for the model parameters and a chi-square test of the overall goodness of fit of the model to the data.

The results of this analysis provided a non-significant chi-square (χ^2=2.32, df=2, p=.3128), suggesting that the specified linear recursive model may be tenable. However, further examination revealed only one path was significant at the $p < .05$ level by means of a 2-tailed t-test. This was the direct path of stress to burnout (β=.52, t=5.11, $p < .05$). No other significant paths were found (see Figure 4).

Insert Figure 4 about here

To further explore these findings, the model was respecified to include only the significant path of stress to burnout. The χ^2 for this revised model showed a good fit of the model to the data (χ^2=9.56, df=6, p=.1444). The coefficient for this direct path was .50 (t=4.96, $p < .05$), with a residual variance of .55.

A comparison of the two models was done by computing the difference between the χ^2 values for the two models and dividing the difference in their degrees of freedom (Joreskog, 1974). The results of this calculation was a χ^2 of 7.24 with 4 degrees of freedom (n.s.). The fact that the χ^2 was still not significant

when all paths except for stress to burnout were deleted suggests that the original model can be reduced to this one direct path.

A comparison of the results of the correlations, regression analyses, and overall test of the model is found in Table 3.

Insert Table 3 about here

Discussion and Implications

Although the zero-order correlation and regression analyses revealed significant relationships for all but one of the hypotheses, when the entire model was tested using LISREL (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1978), only the relationship between job-related stress and burnout (H_2) remained significant. It is probable that the earlier significant relationships were due to the slight multicolinearity between network integration and job-related stress ($r=.21$, $p < .05$). Given that the model tested in this study was drawn from the current burnout literature, its lack of empirical support calls into question many assertions made and accepted throughout the literature.

In this study, cognitive distance was neither directly related to burnout or indirectly related through network integration or job-related stress. It appears that how cognitively similar or different people perceive themselves from their job has no effect on their level of burnout. This finding challenges the assumption that human service workers define themselves by their job and that this close identification with their work makes them vulnerable to burnout. Although this relationship is commonly asserted, there is no empirical evidence to support the claim.

No relationship was found for the hypothesized relationship between network integration and burnout. It is important to note that this study focused on integration in the work unit. While integration in networks throughout the

entire organization has been found to buffer burnout (Albrecht et al., in press), previous research has not investigated the role of one's communication in the work unit on this buffering process. Although workers physically and psychologically spend the majority of their time at work on their unit, the results of this study indicate that social support within the unit does not mediate burnout.

This study does provide strong empirical support for the conceptual definition of burnout as a reaction to chronic job-related stress. People who experience more stress at work experience more burnout. LFAT provided a useful way of determining and examining stressors from an explicit communication perspective by having organization members generate the salient stressors, rather than have them chosen and imposed by the researcher.

The use of structural equation modelling in this study was useful in several ways. First, by examining the relationships between all variables simultaneously, it corresponds well with systems concepts. Second, by controlling for measurement error, it provides a rigorous test of the model and provides the least biased path estimates. It also allows for the testing of competing models to aid in finding a good fit of the model to the data.

The results of this study provide several pragmatic and theoretic implications. These implications are of particular interest due to the current focus by researchers and the public on the topic of job burnout.

Pragmatic Implications. The majority of popular press, radio and TV talk shows, and seminars devoted to burnout assert that it is a serious problem experienced particularly by those in human service occupations. It is portrayed as ultimately disabling to the individual and the organization. However, the relatively low level of burnout found in this study suggests that extreme burnout may be less prevalent than is generally assumed. The assumption that burnout is always negative should also be questioned. Those who experience burnout may

not belong in human service work in the first place. For some of these people, burnout may act as a mechanism causing them to change professions, benefitting both themselves and the organization.

The uniqueness of burnout to human service workers must also be challenged. Occasional references to the "blue collar blues" (Seashore & Barnowe, 1972) suggests that a similar phenomenon occurs in business organizations. However, no attempts have been made to investigate burnout in organizations other than human services. Comparative research, by identifying common and unique factors across organizations, would provide a more fruitful conceptualization of burnout.

Further, burnout may not be restricted to the work setting. Freudenberger (1980) claims that burnout occurs in all aspects of life. He contends that the locus of burnout varies and, regardless of its origin, affects all aspects of one's life. This conceptualization differs from the usual emphasis placed on the nature of human service work and the type of worker who is attracted to it Following Freudenberger (1980), expanding system boundaries to beyond the work setting might provide a more comprehensive understanding of burnout.

Theoretic Implications. Although LFAT was useful for explaining differences in burnout based on perceptions of salient stressors, the conceptual framework based on LFAT and social structure did not, overally, add to the understanding of burnout. It is necessary to consider why the theoretic framework was not supported. The lack of support may be more a reflection of the operationalization of the model, rather than its conceptual utility.

First, the construct validity of the MBI must be questioned. The lack of replication of Maslach and Jackson's (1980) factor structure and the low convergent validity of the MBI and Tedium Scale warrants skepticism in assuming that the MBI is, in fact, tapping burnout. Also, Maslach and Jackson (1980) claim that the MBI measures four developmental stages of burnout. However, there is no

evidence that these stages are actually being measured. Further, there is no empirical evidence that the stages they posit are valid. Since burnout is conceptualized as developmental, it can only be understood to the extent that this process is validly measured. Organizations should be cautious when making decisions based solely on results obtained with this instrument.

Before assuming that cognitive distance is not related to burnout, it would be useful to have organization members differentiate the global concept of job. Drawing from LFAT and previous research (Albrecht, 1979; Taylor, 1977), members of the organization should identify the salient dimensions of their job. This would provide an understanding of what specific dimensions workers see as included in their job. Measuring their cognitive distance of each specific dimension to their concept of self would provide a theoretically stronger conceptualization of the distancing process.

Finally, knowing a person's frequency of communication throughout the network does not necessarily imply integration in a support network. The importance of the communication, as well as the valence of the messages, should also be determined. While the content areas measured in this study included job and non-job related topics, these topics may have little association with a person's integration in a support network. Asking workers to name who they talk to for support, the importance and frequency of this talk, and how supported they perceive themselves to be would provide a more valid assessment of their perceived integration in a support network.

If a theory of burnout is to be developed, more basic research is mandatory. Further examination of the burnout construct is necessary, as are longitudinal studies and replications in different types of organizations. Empirical support for a theory of burnout would enable organizations to determine its existence, control, and ultimately prevent burnout from reaching dysfunctional levels.

However, the present lack of theory urges that organizations who perceive a burnout problem and attempt to remedy it procede with caution. Reliance on intuitively appealing strategies may be attractive. But prior to investing time, money, and energy, organizations should be made aware of the ambiguous "state of the art." The results of this study strongly suggest that burnout is more complex than the current literature indicates.

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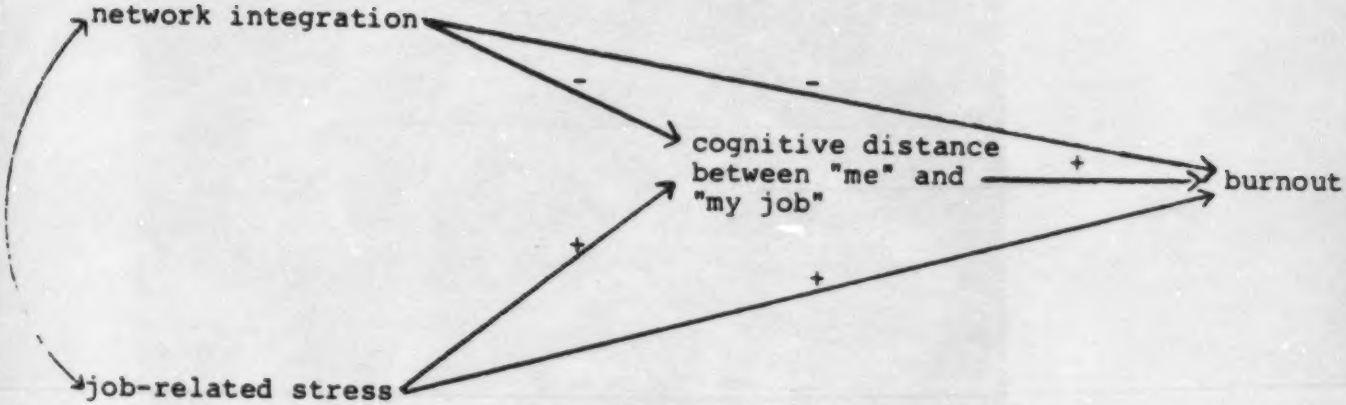


Figure 1. Causal Model of Research Hypotheses

Table 1. Reliabilities

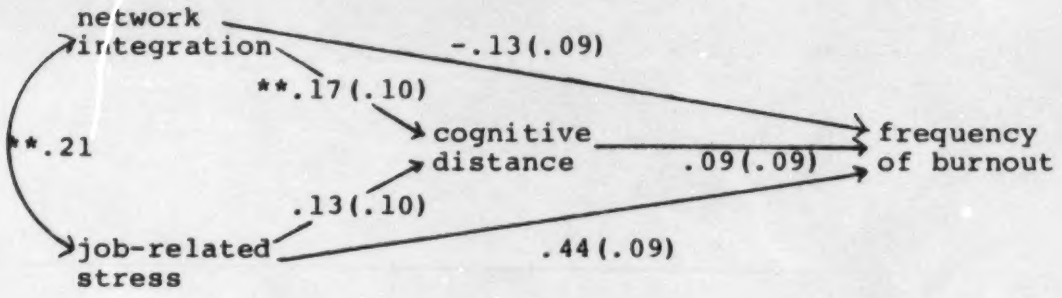
Scale	Alpha Wave 1	Alpha Wave 2	Test-Retest
MBI			
Subscales:			
Emotional Exhaustion			
Frequency	.87	.90	.83
Intensity	.82	.88	.85
Personal Involvement			
Frequency	.45	.54	.70
Intensity	.50	.47	.63
Personal Accomplishment			
Frequency	.56	.62	.53
Intensity	.54	.64	.56
Depersonalization			
Frequency	.75	.81	.79
Intensity	.72	.80	.77
Total Burnout			
Frequency	.84	.87	.78
Intensity	.79	.86	.77
Tedium	.86	.88	.33
Cognitive Distance	.74	.76	.62
Job-Related Stress	.96	.96	.73
Network Integration	***	***	.89

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Model Variables

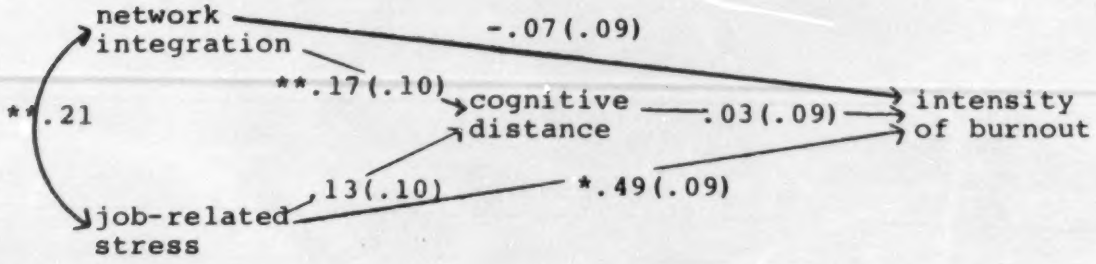
	Frequency of Burnout	Intensity of Burnout	Cognitive Distance	Network Integration	Job-Related Stress
Frequency of Burnout	1.00				
Intensity of Burnout	* .84	1.00			
Cognitive Distance	.14	.10	1.00		
Network Integration	-.02	.04	** .20	1.00	
Job-Related Stress	* .43	* .49	** .17	** .21	1.00

*$p \leq .001$; **$p < .05$

Model A. Frequency of Burnout



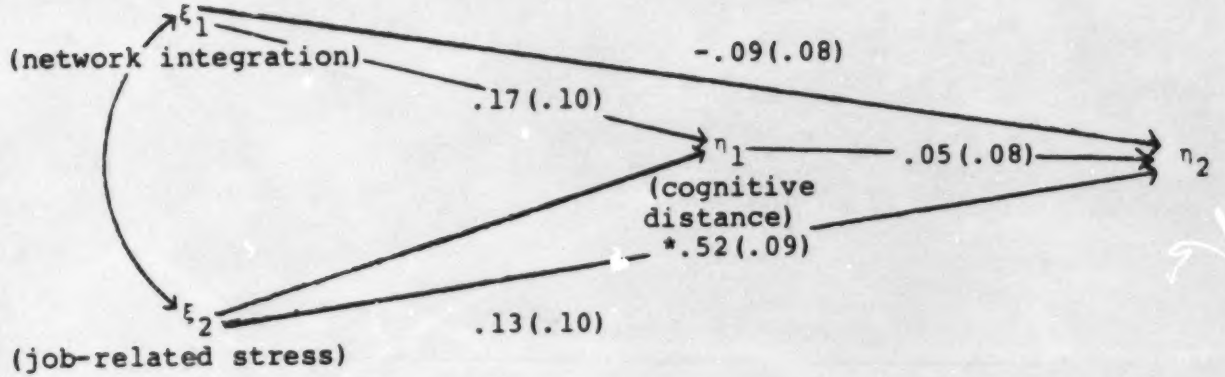
Model B. Intensity of Burnout



Notes: Standardized regression coefficients are followed by the standard errors in parentheses.

*p ≤ .001; **p< .05

Figure 3. Regression Coefficients and Correlations Among Exogenous Variables



Notes: Standard errors follow the coefficients in parentheses.

*t = 5.11, p < .05

Figure 4. Path Coefficients for Overall Test of Model

Table 3. Comparison of the Analyses of the Model

Path	Correlation (Decomposition Change)	Regression	Overall Test
Network Integration and Burnout			
Frequency	-.02 (0)	-.13	-.09
Intensity	.04 (0)	-.07	
Job-Related Stress and Burnout			
Frequency	*.43 (.48)	*.44	**.52
Intensity	*.49 (.52)	*.49	
Cognitive Distance and Burnout			
Frequency	.14 (.19)	.09	.05
Intensity	.10 (0)	.03	
Network Integration and Cognitive Distance	**.20	**.17	.17
Job-Related Stress and Cognitive Distance	**.17	.13	.13
Network Integration and Job-Related Stress	**.21	**.21	.21

*$p \leq .001$
**$p < .05$